House Unit Swears In Sprague

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The House Assassinations Committee today swore in as counsel a tough ex-prosecutor who immediately said it could take him years to get answers about the killings of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr.

Richard A. Sprague told the news conference that his new employers could not expect to give him a deadline for a report on what he characterized as homicide investigations.

Sprague, recently in private practice, was a longtime Philadelphia assistant district attorney who won national fame as the tenacious special prosecutor of the killers of United Mine Workers Union insurgent Jock Yablonski, Yablonski's wife and their daughter.

"I start, really, not assuming anything . . . from ground zero," Sprague said. "I'm entering this investigation with a completely open mind."

Perhaps foreshadowing a conflict to come with other agencies of government, Sprague said he would consider no document, no label and no testimony as beyond the reach of his investigation.

Sprague said that he has requested a meeting with the heads of the Justice Department, the Central Intelligence Agency and the FBI.

The chairman of the new House committee, Rep. Thomas N. Downing, D-Va., said he was "confident that the select committee will provide the American people with the truth as to what happened to their president and to one of their most prominent national figures."

Sprague said he would initially analyze the two cases to determine among other things the size of the staffs that would be required. He said the two investigations would be handled by separate staffs and would proceed simultaneously.

Downing said the committee would exercise only "veto" power over Sprague's actions, that is telling him to stop if he should go too far. Sprague, Downing continued, would then have the option to quit but the chairman added that that kind of confrontation is not expected to arise.